

It's a World of Traps



"For among my people are found wicked men: they lay in wait, as he that setteth snares; they set a trap, they catch men."—Jeremiah v., 26.

A SEEKER after big game, anxious to get fine skins free from bullet holes, may pass a whole Winter trying to trap an old grizzly and then fail. The wise bear goes carefully on his way. He never heard a word of warning from his mother. He has probably not seen other bears in traps—all of us human beings have seen our sons or friends trapped. Yet SOMETHING teaches the bear to be careful. He sniffs, looks and watches carefully if human beings are anywhere about.

He seems able to smell cold steel and keep away from it.

And if in the end he does get trapped, he at least tries to break the trap and leave it behind him.

As soon as he feels the cold steel grip his foot he knows what has happened. Old hunters will tell you that many a time they have found their trap holding the foot of a bear or some other wild animal, the animal having gnawed off its foot to escape.

Very different with young men, and older men, too, walking through the jungle of life.

The young often blunder into the first trap that offers. The old, having been trapped a dozen times, can STILL be trapped.

Each time they seem to say, "That trap looks very pretty. I like the bait that it holds. There can't be any harm in THAT. I think I'll just TRY IT." They try, and snap goes the trap again.

From the very beginning traps have been set with the bait ready, and we poor humans, that learn so slowly, have always nibbled at the bait.

There was the snake holding out the apple bait. Eve took it and Adam bit into it.

And, unlike the bear, Adam had been TOLD. He had been warned, he knew that the fruit of that one tree was the trap in the Garden, but he couldn't keep away from it.

If you show an animal a trap and let him look at it you will never catch him. But you can catch the same man a dozen times in the same trap. If you doubt it, ask the divorce courts, the victims of confidence games, the "easy marks" or the get-rich-quick victims. Examine the strong boxes even of able financiers when they die. You find them holding much trash along with better securities.

An elephant is said to have the brain nearest to man's—far lower in power, of course, but most thoughtful and careful—among animals.

An elephant will feel every bridge with his foot before he walks over it to make sure that it will not give under his weight. He is suspicious about going into swamps. As for catching him in a trap, it is almost impossible unless you can get him stampeded

If the Average Young Man Had the Intelligence of an Old Bear, How Much Better It Would Be for the Average Young Man.

All Along the Road of Life Traps Are Scattered. And for the One Trap of Steel That Threatens the Wild Animal, a Thousand Traps Lie in Wait for the Average Young Human Being.

Yet Nearly All the Animals Know Enough to Look Out for Traps and Avoid Them. Among Men the Average of TRAP INTELLIGENCE Is Lower.

Mr. McCay's Message to Young Men in This Cartoon Is "Watch Your Step." Don't Be More Foolish Than a Bear, a Muskrat or a Tiger.

along the road where the pitfall has been prepared. Then fear sometimes kills caution.

If you want to catch a wild animal you must at least use bait that would be of some USE to the animal, or that APPEARS to be of use.

You can make a trout spring at an artificial fly, but as it seizes the fly you must instantly jerk the line hard enough to make the hook fast, otherwise the artificial fly is instantly spat out.

Human beings will swallow perfectly worthless bait and keep on swallowing it. It seems impossible to teach them.

Mr. McCay's picture shows you traps spread along the road through which we all travel. It is the road of civilization, and it is a kind of jungle in its way.

There are in the jungle of civilization men and women as dangerous as poisonous snakes—even more dangerous. They poison the body and poison the mind; snakes only poison the body.

With his cartoon of a world filled with traps Mr. McCay sends this message:

"I think this picture might be useful to some old and young readers. Many, of course, NOTHING can help. They are like the well-known New Yorker busy losing his money in a gambling house at a Winter resort. A friend warned him that the gambling game was 'crooked'—fixed so that winning was impossible. 'Why did you tell me?' said the gambler, annoyed. 'Don't you know this is the only gambling house in town? Now I can't play.' 'All animals go out looking for traps and try to keep away from them. 'Too many men less wise than the animals go out LOOKING FOR THE TRAPS, ANXIOUS TO FIND THEM.

"Read the stories of fools brought into court, the stories of young men gobbled up by females, whose very bluish, thickly painted on, should have been sufficient warning of the trap. Or consider the young girls of great

wealth, snatched up as a chicken snatches a grain of corn by imitation noblemen from Europe, or by the real article, sometimes worse than the imitation.

"I try to show in my picture that this is a world full of traps. For one trap in the forest where wild animals are caught there are a hundred, or a thousand, in the city, where young men and women are caught.

"The strange part of it is that in cities the traps are labeled, easily seen; they don't even have to be hidden. "When it comes to traps, a bear is ten times as intelligent as the average man. Watch your step."

There are all kinds of traps set for men, but as with other things—fire, earth, water; faith, hope, charity, etc.—the traps go by three, and the first three are baited with "Drink, women, self-indulgence."

Drink is a bait that has trapped millions and cheated many of their chance in life.

The wrong kind of woman is another kind of bait that, since and before the day of Marc Antony, has turned power into stupidity and failure.

Self-indulgence is a sort of marsh trap into which, most easily, its two-legged humans fall.

Among animals you will find the older teaching the young animals to keep away from traps. The bear will go ahead and save its cub from danger. The old elephant goes ahead of the young elephant.

But often among human beings—and that is the worst and most disgusting part of it—you often see the father deliberately leading the son into the very trap by which the father has been caught.

You will see a man encouraging his son in drinking and smoking, or in something far worse. You will see him taking that son into doubtful company, and you will hear the foolish, unworthy excuse, "I want my boy to know the world."

As the teeth of a steel trap leave their marks on an animal's leg, and often mean death and ruin, so the teeth of the social trap, the vicious society or

the vicious habits, leave their marks on the soul of youth, and in the end mean ruin.

The oldest trap, one into which Noah fell and many millions before and since, is alcohol. This country is striving to wipe out that trap by law.

Millions in the past have fallen into it and have been drowned, morally and mentally.

Whether the LAW can save us from traps of any kind—alcoholic or other—or whether we must learn, each for himself, to avoid traps as the animals learn, the experiment now being made in prohibition will tell us.

Meanwhile, as Mr. McCay says, "Watch your step."

Remember Samson, with Delilah cutting off his hair. That was one of the old traps.

He pulled down the temple, but it was too late. He should have said to Delilah, "You mind YOUR business. I am a virtuous giant."

Remember that whoever lays a trap to catch you considers you, first of all, a fool. Indignation, if not the instinct of self-preservation, should make you refuse to be caught.

You pick up a little flat piece of board and see the metal spring that has caught a mouse by the neck. You despise that mouse, perhaps, as you throw it out. But you needn't.

For every mouse caught and strangled in the trap there have been a dozen men caught in a trap less cunningly devised and less difficult to avoid.

A mouse that can be caught in a trap baited with cheese would have too much brains to be caught in a trap baited with oil stocks if it could read and if it knew what happened to others that took such bait.

A mouse tempted by a trap baited with a lady mouse, painted and spangled, would know enough to say, "No; I know ANOTHER lady mouse, quieter, more reliable. I will call on HER."

A man may lead a sensible, long, useful life if he is on the lookout for traps, showing, at least, as much sense as a bear.

WATCH YOUR STEP.

Millions have done their mourning AFTER the trap had seized them.

Consider the verses, so powerfully written, in the eighteenth chapter of Job, verses 8, 9 and 10:

"For he is cast into a net by his own feet, and he walketh upon a snare.

"The gin shall take him by the heel and the robber shall prevail against him.

"The snare is laid for him in the ground, and a trap for him in the way."

Bilddad the Shuhite, one of the original "Job's comforters," knew of the traps and deplored them. Still, they are laid out in the big city, in the little village, and in the quiet country.

They are spread in every kind of business, in every school and college.

But intelligence avoids them, observation discovers them.

WATCH YOUR STEP.